From Retranslation to Back-Translation:

A Bermanian Reading of *The Monk* by Matthew Gregory Lewis, Antonin Artaud, and John Phillips

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According to Walter Benjamin, literary translations cannot, or should not, be translated again.[1] Benjamin's stance on the translation of translations in 'The Task of the Translator' is important for the theorization of back-translation insofar as it prohibits it. In principle, we can of course translate a translation; Benjamin, however, strongly discourages the practice, which harbours significant implications. For if translations are not 'worthy' of translation, how are we to perceive their literary value? When Antoine Berman discussed this paragraph in the series of lectures he gave on Benjamin's text at the Collège International de Philosophie in 1984, he did not exactly argue against Benjamin's position, but he certainly indicated that it should invite further reflection: 'Isn't Benjamin caught between two incompatible thoughts, that of translation as the sur-vival of the text and that of translation as the death of the text?'[2] Back-translations raise similar questions and concerns, not only about their particular status, but also about the larger role played by translation in the trajectory of literary works. Can back-translations also serve as source texts? Once literary works have left their source language, should it be possible for them to travel back 'home'? Do back-translations impede or contribute to the survival of literary works?

[1] Walter Benjamin's stance on the translation of translations rests on the premise that 'there are aspects of a translation that go beyond the communication of meaning', which 'in turn, are not translatable (transferable, transmissible)'. For Benjamin's original statement in German and Berman's critical commentary on that statement, see Antoine Berman, *The Age of Translation: A Commentary on Walter Benjamin's 'The Task of the Translator'*, translated by Chantal Wright (London, 2018), pp. 151–66 (p. 160).
[2] Berman, *Age*, p. 165.

This article contends that Berman's theorization of retranslation, from *L'épreuve de l'étranger* (1984) to *Pour une critique des traductions: John Donne* (1995), is fundamental for the development of scholarship on back-translation. Berman's theorization of retranslation indeed far exceeds the scope of the text within which he formulated the so-called 'retranslation hypothesis', 'La retraduction comme espace de la traduction'.[3] As my Introduction to this special issue clarifies, the retranslation hypothesis as we know it – 'retranslations tend to be closer to source texts' – originated from Andrew Chesterman's understandable but reductive interpretation of the series of premises Berman proposed in this text.[4] The present essay furthers the alternative reading initiated in the Introduction, offering translations and interpretations of two of Berman's premises which are rarely quoted: that all translations are impaired by powerful forces of 'non-translation', especially first translations; and that the conflict within first translations is 'attenuated' by retranslation. To develop these two ideas, Berman created the concept of 'défaillance'. In what follows, the evolution of this concept is traced through Berman's œuvre, and its significance for the study of literary back-translations demonstrated through close analysis of Antonin Artaud's French translation of *The Monk* by Matthew Gregory Lewis[5] and of its recent back-translation by John Phillips.[6]

A priori, *The Monk* may appear an odd choice of case study, not only because, in the words of Nick Groom, the 'rollicking narrative' that Lewis published in 1796 is a 'gruesome catalogue of sins and depravities' which 'holds the dubious distinction of being the first

[3] Antoine Berman, 'La retraduction comme espace de traduction', *Palimpsestes*, 4 (1990), 1-7.
[4] Andrew Chesterman, 'Beyond the Particular', in *Translation Universals: Do They Exist?*, edited by Anna Mauranen and Pekka Kujamäki (Amsterdam, 2004), pp. 33–50 (p. 40).
[5] Antonin Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, edited by Paule Thévenin, 26 vols (Paris, 1976–94), VI.
[6] *Artaud's The Monk*, edited by Stephen Barber, translated by John Phillips (London, 2003).

horror novel of English literature',[7] but also because the status of Artaud's translation remains debatable. While for some critics it is indeed a translation, for others it clearly is an adaptation,[8] and to complicate matters, when referring to his own work, Artaud's preferred term was 'copy', which invites us to approach his intervention as a translator as closer to the art of copyists and the work of painters emulating their masters in the Renaissance:

> La présente édition … n'est ni une traduction ni une adaptation – avec toutes les sales privautés que ce mot suppose avec un texte – mais une sorte de "copie" en français du texte anglais original. Comme d'un peintre qui copierait le chef-d'œuvre d'un maître ancien, avec toutes les conséquences d'harmonies, de couleurs, d'images surajoutées et personnelles que sa vue lui peut suggérer.[9]
>
> (The present edition … is neither a translation nor an adaptation – with all the filthy liberties that the word implies can be taken with a text – but a sort of 'copy' in French of the English original. As a painter would copy the work of an old master, with all the consequences that harmonies, colours, and superimposed personal images, that his own vision can suggest.)

Artaud's conception of the translator's task may appear disconcerting, taking translation as it does back in time and into the realm of another artistic discipline, but his 'copy' represents

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[7] Matthew Gregory Lewis, *The Monk*, edited by Howard Anderson and Nick Groom (Oxford, 2016), p. vii.

[8] While Artaud significantly rewrote certain passages, in others his translation remains extremely close to the original text, and while he refuses to employ the term 'adaptation' in his preface, he constantly refers to his work as such in letters to Jean Paulhan. This contradiction can be explained by the context within which Artaud produced his 'copy' of *The Monk*: in 1930, he was seeking recognition for his own work and was hoping to get excerpts published in the *NRF*.

[9] Artaud, p. 11; my translation follows.

an ideal text for the analysis of zones of 'défaillance'. For *The Monk* not only possesses the advantage of having been back-translated by John Phillips in 2003. Artaud's own writing also manifests a high level of resistance to translation,[10] and according to Berman 'défaillance' is best illustrated by writing styles 'in which translatability and untranslatability, consent and resistance to translation are clearly apparent.'[11]

Benjamin refers to such textual zones within translations as 'untranslatable kernels': 'precisely this essential kernel can be determined as that within translations which cannot be translated again'.[12] The latter version of Benjamin's statement ironically accomplishes what it prohibits, for it results from the translation of a translation. Chantal Wright's English rendering of Berman's French rendering of Benjamin here stresses the iterability pertaining to both retranslations and back-translations: 'that within translations which cannot be translated *again*.' In contrast, Steven Rendall's translation – 'this essential core can be more precisely defined as that which in itself is untranslatable'– does not convey this iterability, nor does it render the rhetorical ambiguity with which Benjamin condemned it, namely the compound 'wiederum' which can mean 'again' or 'then again'.[13] Berman was undoubtedly attentive to this point in his commentary on Benjamin's text because of his own preoccupation with retranslation, which is why his scholarship constitutes the framework of

[10] Artaud's singular use of vocabulary and syntax rivals Hölderlin's, the example both Benjamin and Berman invoke in their discussions of retranslation.
[11] Berman, *Age*, p. 68.
[12] Walter Benjamin quoted in Berman, *Age*, p. 160.
[13] 'The Translator's Task', translated by Steven Rendall, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, edited by Lawrence Venuti, third edn (London, 2012), p. 79. Wright restores the iterability conveyed by Benjamin's use of 'wiederum', which is missing from Steven Rendall's translation but also stretched in a different direction by Harry Zohn: 'that element in the translation which does not lend itself to a further translation' (Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings: 1913–1926*, edited by Marcus Bullock and Michael Jennings, translated by Harry Zohn, fifth edn [Cambridge, MA, 2002], pp. 257–8). For a reflection on the significance of this statement for Jacques Derrida and Werner Hamacher based on Zohn's translation, see Dominik Zechner's contribution within this special issue.

this essay. No other theorist, perhaps, pursued with more assiduity the theoretical implications of the iterability characteristic of retranslations as well as of back-translations.

If the existence of literary back-translations calls Benjamin's stance into question, it doesn't refute it entirely. All back-translations are far from being successful, and as Berman's concept of 'défaillance' acknowledges, there are manifestly 'kernels' within translations that resist translation. This article argues that the study of zones of 'défaillance' within literary back-translations is valuable precisely insofar as it can illuminate that resistance, not only within translations but also within originals. When grappling with such kernels, like any other translator, Phillips produces deficiencies, but his back-translation of *The Monk* raises new and compelling questions. In his Foreword, Phillips significantly presents his main objective as a back-translator by challenging readers:

> Readers will judge for themselves whether I have succeeded more or less in conveying accurately and unobtrusively the voices of both Antonin Artaud and Matthew Lewis … My own voice, too, may occasionally be heard, though I hope that, like the rustle of leaves at a summer concert, it will be no more than a faint whisper in the background.[14]

Admittedly, Phillips' project is ambitious, not only because of the sheer number of sources that were used and misused, adapted and parodied by Lewis, but also because of 'the inflamed signature of Artaud's incontestable voice'.[15] Then again, how could his aim have been any different? If literary back-translations are to be produced, then back-translators should indeed attempt to render both textual layers of the literary work at hand, not just the

[14] John Phillips, 'Foreword', in *Artaud's The Monk*, 9-15 (p. 14).
[15] Jacques Derrida, *Artaud The Moma*, translated by Peggy Kamuf (New York, 2017), p. 77.

earliest or the latest one. What Phillips crucially underlines here is the intrinsic difficulty of the back-translation process: insofar as it involves two source texts, it effectively becomes a double task. It may not be as impossible as Benjamin contended, but it certainly constitutes a challenge. Literary back-translations are compelling because, rather than in spite of, the challenge they represent. Accordingly, my aim in this essay is less to evaluate the quality of Phillips' back-translation, or whether he has been successful in rendering each and every possible source behind the passages of *The Monk* to be discussed, than to demonstrate, through comparative analysis of its 'défaillances', what might be called 'the emphasizing potential' of literary back-translations: that is to say, how a literary back-translation can magnify elements that were undeveloped in its two source texts.

In *The Age of Translation*, Berman remarks that the fragmentary aspect of Benjamin's writing style also applies to his thinking: 'The reader is confronted with *definite sketches* – but sketches nonetheless. Whenever Benjamin wishes to develop a different axis of his thought, he has to reformulate it completely.' The same fragmentariness strikingly applies to his own writing and thinking. Just like 'understanding Benjamin', then, understanding Berman amounts to 'finding the places where a particular thought appears under a different terminological guise, and attempting to (re)establish the constellation to which the concept belongs'.[16]From 1984 to 1991, Berman kept rethinking the concept of 'défaillance'. Each definition presents slight variations, and these variations themselves require comparative analysis, in order to appreciate the significance of his concept for the theorization of retranslation and back-translation.

[16] Berman, *Age*, p. 32. Barbara Godard similarly observes the fragmentary aspect of Berman's thoughts on Benjamin, and it could be productive to trace these as well throughout his oeuvre. Godard, 'L'éthique du traduire: Antoine Berman et le "virage éthique" en traduction', *Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction*, 14.2 (2001), 49–82 (p. 65).

According to Berman in 'La retraduction comme espace de la traduction', there are two main reasons to retranslate: 'because translations age, and because none is *the* translation' ('Il faut retraduire parce que les traductions vieillissent, et parce qu'aucune n'est *la* traduction').[17] While the former route, the one he pursued more fully, could only be articulated through binaries (old/new, great/poor, first/accomplished) and was therefore bound to attract ideological criticism, the latter route would generate important conceptual propositions, starting from his definition of 'défaillance' in this article. Berman's text was never translated, so my translation follows:

> Toute traduction est défaillante, c'est-à-dire entropique, quels que soient ses principes. Ce qui veut dire: toute traduction est marquée par de la 'non-traduction'. Et les premières traductions sont celles qui sont les plus frappées par la non-traduction. Tout se passe comme si les forces anti-traductives qui provoquent la 'défaillance' étaient, ici, toutes puissantes. Si la défaillance, c'est-à-dire simultanément l'incapacité de traduire et la résistance au traduire, affecte tout acte de traduction, il y a néanmoins une temporalité de cet acte … La retraduction surgit de la nécessité non certes de supprimer, mais au moins de réduire la défaillance originelle.[18]
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> (Every translation is struggling, entropic, regardless of its principles, which really means: all translations bear the traces of 'non-translation'. And first translations are the most affected by non-translation. It is as though the 'anti-translative' forces that bring about the struggle were then all-powerful. If the struggle, that is to say, at

[17] Berman, 'La retraduction', p. 1; emphasis original, my translation.
[18] Berman, 'La retraduction', p. 3.

> once the inability to translate and the resistance to translation, always affects the act of translating, there is nevertheless a temporality to this act … Retranslations stem from the necessity, perhaps not to suppress the struggle, but at least to attenuate it.)

I propose to translate 'défaillance' as 'struggle' here for two main reasons. As Director of the translation stream at the Collège International de Philosophie in the 1980s, Berman ought to have been involved in critical discussions on the concept of 'faille'. Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy, Hélène Cixous, and Maurice Blanchot all theorized 'la faille', not as a weakness or a failure, but as a wound: a space characterized by negativity, but a negativity that enables development, a space to think where suffering and healing are no longer to be understood as opposites but as part of the same process, that of creation. The notion of 'struggle' implies similar dynamics within translation. Other renderings have of course been suggested, but they reduce Berman's notion to pure negativity. Stefan Heyvaert proposed 'failing',[19] Françoise Massardier-Kenney 'faltering, decay, deficiency',[20] Sharon Deane-Cox 'shortcoming',[21] and Chantal Wright 'default',[22] all of which define 'défaillance' as a form of weakness. Neither positive nor negative, the notion of 'struggle' I suggest aims to restore its Hegelian and Freudian complexity to Berman's concept: it posits the scene of translation as fundamentally agonistic. Each translation presents a number of challenges, but rather than their outcome, what preoccupied Berman, and what such mistranslations of 'défaillance' overlook, is the nature of such challenges and their attenuation through reiteration. If 'every translation is struggling … regardless of its principles', surely, the theoretical implications

[19] Antoine Berman, *The Experience of the Foreign*, translated by Stefan Heyvaert (New York, 1992), p. 185.
[20] Françoise Massardier-Kenney, 'Toward a Rethinking of Retranslation', *Translation Review*, 92 (2015), 73–85 (p. 73).
[21] Sharon Deane-Cox, *Retranslation: Translation, Literature and Reinterpretation* (New York, 2016), p. 3.
[22] Berman, *Age*, p. 6.

of Berman's concept are more significant than the critical assessment of this or that translation.[23]

The translation of theoretical notions always raises methodological concerns; what makes Berman's notion especially difficult to grasp is that it embraces two situations we generally consider separately. When applied to individual translations 'défaillance' seems to have a pejorative connotation, but when pointing to moments in the translation process it becomes positive. Berman's definition also appears divided: the 'inability to translate' clearly pertains to the translator, but the 'resistance to translation' originates from the text, and the two meanings of his concept correspond to the two 'routes' previously outlined: while 'the inability to translate' was understandably criticized because ideological factors always influence translators' decisions, the analysis of the text's 'resistance to translation' remains theoretically promising.

'Retranslations', concludes Berman, 'stem from the necessity, perhaps not to suppress the struggle, but at least to attenuate it'. 'Within an accomplished retranslation', he continues, 'there prevails a singular abundance … this abundance emerges first and foremost from the reiteration which is retranslation'.[24] What are the implications of this last premise about retranslations for back-translations? When the movement of translation gets repeated through retranslation, polysemy and polyphony are recreated; when returning literary works to the language of their source texts, however, do back-translations function as retranslations? Do they also attenuate the struggle pertaining to first translations, or do they aggravate it by imparting an unusual trajectory to literary works?

[23] As Sherry Simon points out, Berman always advocated for a holistic approach to literary translations, and therefore insisted on the need for theory to be grounded in close textual analysis. Simon, 'Antoine Berman ou l'absolu critique', *TTR*, 14.2 (2001), 19–29 (p. 23).
[24] 'Dans la retraduction accomplie règne une abondance spécifique […] Cette abondance surgit primordialement de la réitération que constitue la retraduction' (Berman, 'La retraduction', pp. 5-6; my translation).

In his last monograph, Berman specifically addresses the translation of translations as a means to attenuate 'défaillances', not without scepticism: 'but what *sense*', he asks, 'can the translation of its translation have for the original?'[25] For Benjamin, of course, there is none; nothing is to be gained or achieved from translating translations, and Berman is rather close to affirming as much in this passage. But why discuss the literary practices of Léon Robel or of the Polivanov group, if they were not of interest? After quoting Robel at length, Berman hastily concludes: 'pure game', 'pure experiment',[26] before moving on to another subject. In 'The Task of The Translator', Benjamin similarly appears to digress when quoting from Rudolf Pannwitz on the necessity of broadening and deepening our language through the foreign and of pushing back 'to the final elements of language itself where word image sound move into one', for, as Berman rhetorically points out in his commentary, 'who reads Pannwitz anyway?' Yet as he goes on to explain, these were 'words of historical importance on the subject of translation'.[27] We may likewise wonder who reads Robel today. Then again, what looks like a digression in Berman's monograph raises an important problem for his reflection on retranslation, and does so in ways that clarify how their abundance can attenuate the struggle affecting first translations. For Robel, successful retranslations are those whose 'phono-semantic network' 'offers in turn the greatest number of possibilities of translations'.[28] As a title, 'La retraduction comme espace de la traduction' ('retranslation as a space for translation') indeed proposes a similar principle. It also recurs in *Toward a Translation Criticism*: 'It is in retranslation, better yet, in successive or simultaneous retranslations, that translation is played out.'[29] Although he never put it in these terms, for

[25] Antoine Berman, *Toward a Translation Criticism: John Donne*, translated by Françoise Massardier-Kenney (Kent, OH, 2009), p. 217; emphasis original.
[26] Berman, *Toward a Translation Criticism*, p. 217.
[27] Berman, *Age*, p. 207.
[28] Léon Robel, 'La traduction en jeu', *Change*, 19 (1974), pp. 54–5, quoted in Berman, *Toward a Translation Criticism*, p. 217.
[29] Berman, *Toward a Translation Criticism*, p. 67.

Berman retranslation could be said to represent one of several nested structures comparable to Russian dolls: just as the original is 'played out' or at stake in translation, translation is at stake in retranslation, and I would add that retranslation is at stake in back-translation.

Berman probably dismissed the significance of 'the translation of translations' as an experimental problem with little implication for retranslations because of the question he was asking: 'what sense can the translation of translations have for the original?' Before looking backward, he did not think to look forward. In other words, he did not think to look backward twice. While we may expect the study of back-translations to open up infinite possibilities in the future, what the singular 'return' pertaining to back-translations unfolds is that this series of regress functions the other way around. Back-translations, as Phillips' case will illustrate, are not always aesthetically pleasing and do not necessarily constitute the achievement of literary works. Rather, the value of back-translations rests on their magnifying or revelatory potential: adding a third translative layer (back-translations) retrospectively reveals the significance of the second layer (retranslations), which in turn reveals the significance of the first layer (the original text). But what exactly gets magnified or revealed through this series of regress?

To answer this question and formulate the hypothesis to be investigated in the case of Phillips' back-translation, we need to go back to the very first definition of 'défaillance' provided by Berman in *L'épreuve de l'étranger*, which borrows from Freud: 'La défaillance de la traduction, c'est ce qui s'appelle cliniquement le refoulement' ('The struggle within translation corresponds to repression in clinical terms').[30] My translation modifies Heyvaert's here because his rendering of 'défaillance' is deeply unfortunate; whether or not the translator relied on a standard English translation of Freud, the significance of 'défaillance', both for Freud and for Berman, requires a more dialectical term than 'failing'.

[30] Berman, *L'épreuve de l'étranger,* p. 296; *The Experience of the Foreign*, p. 185.

Berman's citation of Freud in *L'épreuve de l'étranger* clarifies that the 'resistance to translation' in his later definition is to be understood in psychoanalytical terms, and that the study of 'défaillances' aims to determine what was obscured or indeed repressed in the original and 'resurfaced' in the translation. Such analysis involves a retrospective movement: from traces of struggle within translations, Berman invites us to work out what elements were present but not developed in the corresponding passages of the original. If Berman kept stressing the need to develop a psychoanalytical approach to translation, the parallel he established between 'défaillance' and 'refoulement' was itself quickly repressed after *L'épreuve de l'étranger*. Yet, without this dimension, his theorization of retranslation remains opaque. Once restored, it helps us understand not only that his concept operates like repression in Freud's theory but that it incurs the same risks: the study of 'défaillance' should not be defined as the analysis of a translator's 'failings', any more than psychoanalysis should be perceived as the 'cure of repression'.[31] Both investigations, however, necessitate a form of anamnesis to enlighten their object. In sum, the analysis of 'défaillances' demands more than a mere assessment of translators' skills; it consists in identifying zones of struggle in literary translations, in order to trace back the history of an overarching conflict. In that context, the more translative layers there are the better, each of them bearing traces like so many symptoms, or perspectives on the literary work to be analysed.

It is regrettably in another untranslated text, and in the middle of a close analysis of Hölderlin, that Berman summarized his theory of translation in clear psychoanalytical terms:

> [L'œuvre est] le lieu d'un *combat* entre deux dimensions fondamentales et la traduction *intervient* comme un moment dans la vie de l'œuvre où le combat est

[31] In translating 'défaillance' as 'failing' in *The Experience of The Foreign*, Heyvaert implied this correlation, hence the need for an adequate translation of Berman's term.

> réactivé, mais *en sens contraire*, puisque l'acte de traduire consiste à accentuer le principe ou élément que l'original a occulté.[32]
>
> ([Literary works are] the site of a *conflict* between two fundamental dimensions and translation *intervenes* at a moment in their life to reactivate that conflict, but *in the opposite direction*. For the act of translating consists in accentuating the principle or element that the original has obfuscated.)

Even though the analysis of 'défaillance' within translations is source-oriented, it helps us deconstruct the notion of 'original'. For, once we accept that there was 'struggle' within the original, we also accept that what we hold as the 'original' is but a version, one possible iteration, of the literary work. In sum, writes Berman, translations are a 'manifestation of the origin of the original'.[33] Back-translations crucially reinforce Berman's premise here, insofar as they prolong the trajectory of retranslations. That is, translations, retranslations, and back-translations emerge as so many 'second chances' for what could have been written at the previous stage. Once unearthed and extended to back-translations, the psychoanalytical dimension of Berman's concept can transform how we approach literary works, as the study of zones of struggle in the following back-translation should illustrate.

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[32] Antoine Berman, *La Traduction et la lettre ou l'Auberge du lointain*, second edn (Paris, 1999), p. 88; emphases original, my translation follows.

[33] 'Hölderlin nous a transmis quelque chose de fondamental, qui concerne l'essence de la traduction en général … la traduction comme *manifestation de l'origine de l'original* (Berman, *La Traduction et la lettre*, p. 95; emphasis original). Berman formulated this premise in *L'épreuve de l'étranger*, but his conception of translation at that time was more Platonic than psychoanalytical, so his statement did not carry the same implications for the analysis of translations: 'The original is only the copy … of this *a priori* figure which presides over its being and gives it its necessity … translation aims precisely at this Idea, this origin of the original.' Berman, *The Experience of the Foreign*, p. 107.

John Phillips appears to have been acutely aware of the need to take both Matthew Gregory Lewis and Antonin Artaud's texts into account in the production of his back-translation, not only because his foreword clearly outlines his aim as conveying their two voices,[34] but also because of the predominance it ascribes to the discussion of taboos:

> Surrealism was strongly influenced by Freud's analysis of the taboo and our unconscious urge to transgress, as expressed, for example, in dreams … The oneiric aspects of Artaud's text clearly have unconscious elements that Lewis was not able to draw upon, as also does Artaud's understanding of sexual lust and cruelty. Lewis's novel undoubtedly struck a strongly personal chord in Artaud, awakening his own unconscious fantasies of violence and cruelty, and perhaps helping to inform his theatrical experiments in this area.[35]

Phillips' foreword attends to multiple 'elements' that are relevant for the analysis of Artaud's translation, which require to be unpacked. It suggests Artaud's translation of *The Monk* in 1930 was influenced by André Breton's 'Manifeste du surréalisme' (1924), which was itself influenced by Freud's 'discovery of the unconscious', and that his translation would have informed *The Theatre and its Double* (1935). However, it overlooks Artaud's rupture with Surrealism and his subsequent 'excommunication' by Breton in the 'Second manifeste du surréalisme' (1929). It also mistakes Artaud's 'theatre of cruelty' for actual cruelty.[36] Both suggestions are symptomatic of the reception of Artaud's works. The 'unconscious fantasies'

[34] Phillips (n. 14).
[35] Phillips, p. 11.
[36] 'As soon as I uttered the word "cruelty" everyone immediately took it to mean "blood". But *theatre of cruelty* means … that much more terrible and necessary cruelty which things can practice on us. We are not free. And the sky can still fall on our heads. And the theatre has been created to teach us, first of all, that'. Antonin Artaud, *Selected Writings*, edited by Susan Sontag, translated by Helen Weaver, second edn (Berkeley, CA, 1988), p. 256.

of a writer who spent nine years in psychiatric institutions (1937-43) continue to fascinate readers and this back-translation was intended for scholars as well as for a wider audience, which explains a number of sensationalist claims in Stephen Barber's introduction.[37] As an eminent translator of Sade, Phillips was nevertheless ideally placed to carry out this back-translation of *The Monk*, and his foreword rightly historicize the 'unconscious' as an element that Lewis could not have exploited when composing the text in 1794.

The zones of struggle within the back-translation which are analysed in what follows are located in 'La chute' ('The Fall'), 'La nonne sanglante' ('The Bleeding Nun'), and 'Le viol' ('The Rape'). The modifications Artaud made to Lewis' text were not limited to the accentuation of certain elements since he restructured the novel, adding such short descriptive titles to Lewis' chapters and cutting several passages. He chose to retain scenes centered on the main protagonists, which contributes to dramatize the narrative he also had the project of transforming into a film, but as a result of his emendations the novel loses ironic passages involving secondary characters that were parodying the romance as a literary genre. The most significant of Artaud's cuts indeed include the subtitle 'A Romance', as well as the 'Advertisement' and the 'Imitation to Horace' whereby Lewis alerted readers to his willful 'plagiarisms' and tantalized them to find unwitting ones.[38] Artaud's decision on this point was critical: on the one hand, it removed Lewis from a long tradition of English writers practicing self-reflexive irony and intertextuality, and thereby could be seen as having deprived French readers from an essential aspect of the novel; on the other hand, Phillips' back-translation represents an opportunity for English readers to rediscover Lewis' novel outside that tradition. Ultimately, did Lewis' extensive use of sources enhance or

[37] An important error should also be corrected: Artaud's translation does not constitute 'his only sustained work of prose fiction' (Stephen Barber, 'Introduction', in *Artaud's The Monk*, 5-8, p. 5). Although Artaud was ferociously opposed to the categorization of literary texts into genres, *Héliogabale*, for example, could certainly be considered as such.
[38] Lewis, 'Imitation to Horace' and 'Advertisement', pp. 3–4, 6.

hinder the reception of his novel? This is an important question which is reactivated by the back-translation of *The Monk*.

One may wonder whether French readers, Artaud included, would have noticed the extent of Lewis' intertextual practices. Artaud's preface shows that he was not only aware of them but also of their impact on the reception of the text, and that his emendations were purposely aiming to accentuate instead how Lewis conveyed the supernatural through stylistic means:[39]

> The intrinsic value of *The Monk*, from a literary point of view, is not here in question, and it is not this aspect of the novel that I wish to consider … The scenes of *The Bleeding Nun* and of *The Wandering Jew* … have the same evocative effect, the same power to summon up a whole host of images in the reader's mind as the incantations of a magical ritual with regard to the object of those incantations. I mean that, in a real and material sense, all of this springs from a sort of verbal sorcery, and that I cannot recall any other book evoking, opening up such images for me, images that take one down into all the intellectual depths of one's being, images that, as images, leave in their wake a real current of life that, *as in dreams*, promises new existences and activities ad infinitum.

What may seem an inconsiderate decision, then, should be seen as an effort to promote the poetic aspect of the text, and it should soon become clear how Artaud's translation sought to reinforce Lewis' 'verbal sorcery'. But before identifying and analysing zones of struggle where that verbal sorcery is 'played out', as Berman would put it, a number of considerations need to be examined, starting with Artaud's ability to engage with Lewis' original text. Was

[39] *Artaud's The Monk*, p. 19; emphasis original.

it the case, as Barber affirms in the introduction of the back-translation, that 'Artaud read almost no English at all'?[40] Phillips' foreword is more nuanced, which presents Artaud's knowledge of English as 'too scant for direct translation from the Lewis text … it seems probable that he relied heavily on Léon de Wailly's French translation of 1840.'[41] The latter conclusion is more than probable. As Paule Thévenin, the editor of Artaud's *Œuvres complètes* published by Gallimard, explains in her notes on the text, some passages are reproduced almost word for word. Since Thévenin's notes are unmentioned in Phillips' foreword, readers are left wondering which edition was used for the back-translation.[42] To Karen Emmerich's point that 'translators may have little sense that a choice between editions … may be theirs to make' and that most often this choice is 'certainly not solely theirs', one could add that they may not wish to communicate their choice to readers, which is a separate issue.[43] In the case of Artaud, editorial decisions inevitably get entangled with the legal rights of his beneficiaries,[44] but Thévenin's original edition would have constituted the obvious choice for this project because of her extensive notes on the text.[45] While these remain unmentioned in Phillips' foreword where they would have been expected, Barber's introduction draws attention to them but without clarifying whether the back-translation was established from this edition.[46] Thévenin's notes have yet to be complemented by a sustained

[40] Barber, p. 7.
[41] Phillips, p. 12.
[42] Two other French editions of *Le Moine* were published: a pocket edition was released by Gallimard in 1966 and the text also features in Evelyne Grossman's edition of Artaud's *Œuvres* which was published in one monumental volume by Quarto in 2004.
[43] Karen Emmerich, *Literary Translation and The Making of Originals* (New York, 2017), p. 25.
[44] See Florence de Mèredieu, *L'Affaire Artaud: journal ethnographique* (Paris, 2009).
[45] In the only monograph on Artaud and translation, Anne Tomiche's *'L'Intraduisible dont je suis fait*': *Artaud et les avant-gardes occidentales* (Paris, 2012), there is remarkably no chapter on *Le Moine*, and Jonathan Pollock's companion to Gallimard's pocket edition of Artaud's text mostly enlightens the context within which Lewis and Artaud's texts were respectively composed (Paris, 2002).
[46] Barber, p. 7.

study of Artaud and Lewis' English text, however, which the publication of *Artaud's The Monk* facilitates but also complicates.

While Phillips' ambition was to render two voices, comparative analysis confirms that his back-translation is really based on Artaud's translation. This makes close scrutiny of the two English versions all the more disturbing: they are eerily different. Even if Phillips had for strict rule to avoid reusing the original, he might have felt authorized to reproduce lines from Lewis that were never entirely Lewis'. Some of the songs interrupting the narrative, for example, would certainly have provided an opportunity to do so. Phillips' renderings of these passages present signs of struggle, such as the inability of rendering Artaud's rhymes and singular syntax. Yet, his back-translation usually remains closer to Artaud's translation than to Lewis' text, as in the 'Inscription in an Hermitage'. At this point in the narrative, Ambrosio (a respectable abbot), and the evil Matilda (disguised as a novice) find themselves in a grove. 'The walls were constructed of roots of trees,' writes Lewis, 'and the interstices filed up with moss and ivy.'[47] On a wall, they see a marble tablet where an inscription is engraved. The inscription in Lewis' text contains eight stanzas and nearly fifty lines, whereas Artaud's translation feature eleven. His rendition is relatively faithful to the opening stanza but progressively breaks with the original text, accentuating 'the content and comfort' one can take in solitude, and removing moralizing lines addressing readers: 'This inscription was merely placed here for the ornament of the Grotto, and the sentiments and the Hermit are equally imaginary. Man was born for society…'[48] That Artaud chose to leave out the ensuing dialogue on society and misanthropy reflects less his contempt for that discourse than his wish to reinstate the importance of the protagonists' discovery. For him, the Hermit should not, under any circumstances, be considered 'imaginary'. The seriousness

[47] Lewis, p. 40.
[48] Lewis, p. 42.

with which Artaud approached the supernatural as well as the literary, however, should not be interpreted as a disregard for Lewis' wittiness. On the contrary, his justification for the 'betrayal' of four fifths of the inscription could not have been more faithful to the Gothic spirit of the novel and to Lewis' distinctive humour. That is, Artaud indicated the lines omitted by an ellipsis which emphasizes the enigmatic character of the discovery in the grove, yet his remark on this ellipsis is ironically dismissive: 'The rest of the inscription', he writes, had been 'eaten away by mould.'[49] To a potential reviewer of his translation who must have expressed reservations about Lewis' humour, Artaud replied: 'Never, with this sceptic, this enemy of priests, does humour disturb, *denature* the supernatural.'[50] Rather than aiming to attenuate Lewis' humour, then, Artaud's additions and omissions stem from his desire to accentuate the supernatural and the literary in the novel.

Another zone of struggle in Phillips' back-translation shows how Artaud's translation brought that aspect of Lewis' narrative text to the fore. At a half-point in the novel, Raymond is visited by an apparition. Breathless with fear, he watches the bleeding nun sitting herself opposite him at the foot of the bed. In Lewis' text, the effect of this apparition is emphatically conveyed through the sense of vision:

> *Her eyes* were fixed earnestly upon mine: they seemed endowed with the property of the rattle-snake's, for I strove in vain to look off her. *My eyes* were fascinated, and I had not the power of withdrawing them from the Spectre… She grasped with her icy fingers my hand which hung lifeless upon the Coverture, and pressing her cold lips

[49] *Artaud's The Monk*, p. 57.
[50] 'À aucun moment chez cet incrédule, cet ennemi des prêtres, l'humour ne vient déranger, *dénaturer* le surnaturel' (Artaud, p. 324; emphasis original; my translation).

> to mine, again repeated, 'Raymond! Raymond! Thou art mine! Raymond! Raymond! I am thine![51]

In Phillip's back-translation, however, the formal parallel 'her eyes' / 'my eyes' disappears and the nun's hypnotic hold on its victim is also conveyed through another sense. Vision is complemented by taste, and a new emphasis is placed on the horror of the scene:

> I was forced to drink in all the horror of this vision, as the spectre showed no signs of withdrawing. It looked at me in a manner that was both threatening and desperate and, although it did not open its mouth, I felt these words rain down on me like so many dagger blows: Raymond, Raymond, you are mine and I am yours.[52]

When stating that he intended to render both Lewis and Artaud's voices in his foreword, Phillips specified how he endeavored to do so, that is by attempting 'to preserve the eighteen-century style of the Lewis original as viewed through the prism of Artaud's French, while acknowledging and retaining his occasional linguistic anachronisms.'[53] In light of this statement, readers might have expected the back-translation to restore Lewis' style here by the use of a more formal phrase than 'drink in all the horror' to translate Artaud's 'je dus boire jusqu'à la lie mon épouvante', a highly poetic image which also clearly indicates a sophisticated register in French. The difficulty of translating it could have been the occasion for Phillips to bring back Lewis' 'rattlesnake', and with it, hint at his twist on Edward Moore's comedy *The Foundling* ('she drops plump into his arms, like a charmed bird into the mouth of a rattlesnake') in attributing the hypnotic power to the nun in this passage. For

[51] Lewis, pp. 124–5; my emphasis.
[52] *Artaud's The Monk*, p. 122.
[53] Phillips, p. 14.

in Lewis' text, her eyes are indeed tellingly 'endowed with the property' of the rattle-snake's. While it was not Artaud's prerogative to restore Lewis' sources, it seems to have been Phillips', since by challenging readers to 'judge for themselves' whether he has succeeded in conveying both their voices, his foreword reactivates Lewis' enticement: 'I have now made a full avowal of all the plagiarisms of which I am aware myself; but I doubt not, many more may be found.'[54] Yet, Phillips duly reinstates Lewis' epigraphs which were adapted by Artaud, but not his most obvious (mis)quotations within the text. For example, 'Men have died … and worms have eaten them, but not for love'[55] (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, 4.i) is back-translated as 'Though men have died and been eaten by vermin, lovesickness was not the cause.'[56]

What is most revealing in this zone of struggle, however, is how central compromises become in back-translations. 'To drink in all the horror of this vision' may not convey Lewis and Artaud's 'voices', their fine ear for register and sonority or the evocative potential of their imagery, but it does combine Lewis' emphasis on vision with Artaud's insistence on other senses, taste and touch, in one stunning image: 'I was forced to drink in all the horror of this vision.' It also implies an intriguing reversal of perspectives. While in the back-translation, the grammatical subject of the next sentence is the spectre ('it looked at me'), in the original, Raymond is ('*I* had not the power of withdrawing [my eyes] from the spectre'). The following paragraph in Phillips' back-translation likewise displays traces of struggle where Lewis and Artaud's narrations foreground different perspectives: 'The nun remained

[54] Lewis, p. 6.
[55] 'Men have died, and worms have eat them; but not for Love!' (Lewis, p. 306).
[56] *Artaud's The Monk*, p. 270. Likewise, in Phillips' back-translation, 'many an earthly monarch would dearly love to reign' (p. 170) doesn't restore 'the crown' from the original text: 'many a monarch with pleasure would exchange his crown' (Lewis, p. 196), which must have been an allusion to Shakespeare, whether to *Henry IV* (2.3.i according to Nick Groom's notes in the edition quoted here, p. 352) or *Henry VI* (3.1.iv according to D.L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf's edition [Toronto, 2004], p. 228).

where she was and seemed to take pleasure in keeping me in the petrified state that her apparition had induced in me' is clunky since it keeps repeating pronouns.[57] This 'défaillance' retrospectively allows us to recognize that, whereas Lewis' text continues to draw our attention on the nun's hypnotic power through parallel structures ('She remained for a whole long hour without speaking or moving; nor was I able to do either'), in Artaud's translation, the emphasis falls squarely on the victim's mental state ('cet état d'engourdissement magnétique où son apparition *m'*avait plongé').[58] Artaud's use of the genitive in the rest of this passage systematically provokes 'défaillances' in the back-translation: 'la même paralysante horreur *m'*enchaînait la langue, *me* plombait le corps', for example, is rendered as 'filled my body with lead.'[59] One long sentence in Artaud also generates three in Phillips, another clear indication that the back-translator struggled to recreate the sense of anxiety built through syntax and punctuation in both texts. Such signs of 'défaillance' enable us to appreciate literary translations; in light of Phillips' back-translation, Artaud's translation emerges as a literary text in its own right. But they also clarify the obstacle that back-translators are bound to encounter: the inevitable tension between the two textual layers which are to be translated.

Back-translations differ from retranslations insofar as they are not competing one against another to render the same original: Phillips' back-translation is a translation of two texts and it proves instructive precisely as such. Zones of struggle within the back-translation magnify tensions between Lewis and Artaud's perspectives on the narrative. Whereas in Lewis' original, the narration of episodes within which supernatural events occur or magical powers are displayed mainly affect characters (hypnosis establishes a firm relationship between Raymond and the specter here), slowing down or accelerating the rhythm of the

[57] *Artaud's The Monk*, p. 122.
[58] Lewis, p. 125; Artaud, p. 121.
[59] Artaud, p. 122; *Artaud's The Monk*, p. 123, my emphasis.

plot ('for a whole hour' they couldn't speak or move), in Artaud's translation which abound in reflexive verbs, the effect of 'the supernatural' on characters is amplified, multiplying reflections on selfhood. Active verbs tend to become passive: 'Mes nerfs étaient comme garrottés d'impuissance', writes Artaud, stretching the limits of French language to turn 'garrotter' ('to strangle'), which usually applies to prisoners, into the past participle 'garrotté' complementing 'impuissance' ('powerlessness'). While Artaud's translation brings about a feeling of imprisonment by insisting on emotional turmoil, Phillips' back-translation significantly remains on the surface in this passage, focusing instead on the physical aspect of Artaud's imagery: 'it was as if all sensation had been strangled out of my nerves.'[60] The literary image created is unusual but powerful. Yet the emotion that should have been described in the back-translation here remains untranslated; the protagonist's mental state is once again obscured.

This second example helps clarify both the relevance and the risk of the correlation established by Berman in *L'épreuve de l'étranger* between the analysis of 'défaillances' in translation and of 'repression' in psychoanalysis. Of course, when he translated Lewis, Artaud would have been able to draw on his own experience of mental pain and on the literary skills he had developed to describe it in the texts he had already published by 1930.[61] But the point of analyzing zones of struggle within translations and back-translations is not to psychoanalyze translators, any more than it is to criticize their work. Rather, it is to find out where repression has taken place and determine what might have originally been concealed and successively revealed from version to version. Phillips' back-translation of *The Monk* does not merely point to Artaud's accentuation of the unconscious and

[60] Artaud, p. 121; *Artaud's The Monk*, p. 122.
[61] See, for example, 'Correspondence with Jacques Rivière' (1924), 'The Umbilicus of Limbo' (1925) and 'The Nerve Meter' (1925), in Antonin Artaud, *Selected Writings*, pp. 31–49, 59–76, 79–87.

supernatural elements in Lewis' novel, it establishes the object of repression as what relates these two elements: madness. What Lewis' text conceals or downplays through irony and intertextuality is not so much the transgressive nature of the acts described – apparitions, elopements, rapes, or murders – but what these acts have in common with the locations and atmospheres favored in Gothic literature.[62] Castles, convents, half-erased inscriptions in groves, bedrooms at night, catacombs and vaults can also induce certain emotions and mental states, and when both the supernatural and the transgressive affect one's unconscious in such locations, it can provoke madness.

It is no coincidence if *The Monk* culminates in a rape committed in the vaults adjacent to the convent, and if that passage features one of the scarce moments where the term madness is used in Lewis' classic horror novel.[63] In this third example, the back-translation exhibits a striking sign of 'défaillance' that suggests madness as a problematic theme or phenomenon underdeveloped *The Monk*. While both Lewis and Artaud used the terms 'madness' and 'folie', Phillips himself significantly conceals it by opting for a metaphor: 'unable to procure pleasures to which he had become accustomed and so had ended up a necessity, Ambrosio's concupiscence had now reached *a boiling point*.'[64] Here the syntax is also awkward and the number of prepositions heavy. Yet, the subsequent sentence presents another poetic compromise between Lewis and Artaud's texts to describe the vaults: Phillips back-translates 'the surrounding silence' into 'the solitude of his surroundings.'[65] This syntactical inversion is again due to the addition of a pronoun by Artaud ('la solitude qui

[62] On this point, see Annie Le Brun, *Les Châteaux de la subversion* (Paris, 1986), Maggie Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (London, 1995), or David Stevens, *The Gothic Tradition* (Cambridge, 2000).
[63] 'Madness' recurs 8 times in *The Monk*, whereas there are 62 mentions of 'horror' and 75 of 'terror'.
[64] Lewis, p. 292; Artaud, p. 255; *Artaud's The Monk*, p. 253; my emphasis.
[65] *Artaud's The Monk*, p. 253; Lewis, p. 292.

l'entourait').[66] While this may appear a simple transposition, it is representative of the three layers at stake in back-translation and of how they function in the analysis of 'défaillance'. By adding a pronoun and inverting Lewis' word order, Artaud did not merely accentuate the darkness or the isolation pertaining to the vaults. Phillips' back-translation magnifies Artaud's manipulation of Lewis' text and thereby reveals what might otherwise pass completely unnoticed, namely the threatening thought it implies that the vaults could be capable of feeling and, to some extent, be alive ('the surrounding silence' becomes 'the solitude of his surroundings'). Here again, back-translation enlightens the ingenuity of Artaud's translation: through such slight manipulations of syntax, the Gothic novel progressively becomes even more Gothic in French than it was in English. It also exemplifies how the analysis of zones of struggle in back-translations can be more efficient than in translations: a poetic image might pass unnoticed in one language, stretch the limits of what is acceptable in another, and when returned through back-translation in the initial language strike the imagination, such as 'drinking in visions', 'bodies filled with lead', or 'sensations strangled out of nerves'. From back-translations, more poetic sentences could of course emerge, ones that would have never been created otherwise. In sum, literary back-translations can be awkward or ingenious, but it is precisely insofar as they magnify tensions between literary styles that their analysis is theoretically promising.

In 1943, as part of his psychiatrist's art-therapy, Artaud was invited to translate Lewis Carroll, after which he wrote to Henri Parisot: '"Jabberwocky" is nothing but a sugar-coated and lifeless plagiarism of a work written by me, which has been spirited away so successfully that I myself hardly know what is in it.'[67] In her article on Artaud's translation of Carroll, Alexandra Lukes astutely remarks that 'Translating Carroll would then imply a process of

[66] Artaud, p. 255.
[67] Artaud, *Selected Writings*, p. 451.

"back-translation" that would reinstitute Artaud as the rightful and original author.'[68] I would argue that Lukes' referring to Artaud's translation of Carroll as a back-translation should be seen as an important ethical gesture, for it acknowledges the significance of his statement. This is not to say that Artaud was plagiarized by Carroll, but that his claim and the challenge it poses for literary translation should be recognized in the same way as, for example, Jorge Luis Borges' famous affirmation that 'the original is unfaithful to the translation'. Are Artaud and Borges 'merely playing games here or is it actually possible to imagine that an original might be unfaithful to its translation?'[69] In other words, did Phillips's back-translation render in English what Lewis should have written, from Artaud's point of view? Ultimately, this is the question raised by back-translations and the possibility they imply. This essay will hopefully have demonstrated, with Berman, that the analysis of back-translations can also contribute to enlarge our conception of translation in terms of directionality and creativity, insofar as their retrospective trajectory constitute both a return to, and a rupture with, the original version of literary works.

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[68] Alexandra Lukes, 'The Asylum of Nonsense: Antonin Artaud's Translation of Lewis Carroll', *The Romanic Review*, 104.1-2 (2013), 105–25 (p. 107).
[69] Jorge Luis Borges, quoted in Sergio Gabriel Waisman, *Borges and Translation: The Irreverence of the Periphery* (2005), p. 113.